

I claim:

1. A method of screening water-retentive candidate materials for potential rodenticidal activity in the field, the method comprising providing water-retentive materials as candidate materials, feeding rodents with the candidate materials ad libitum under laboratory conditions, measuring weight loss in the rodents during an initial phase of the testing, and selecting those candidate materials which lead to a mean weight loss of at least 15% of initial body weight.
2. A method according to claim 1 wherein those candidate materials which lead to a mean weight loss of at least 20% of initial body weight are selected.
3. A method according to claim 1 wherein those candidate materials which lead to a mean weight loss of at least 25% of initial body weight are selected.
4. A method according to claim 1 wherein those candidate materials which lead to a mean weight loss of at least 30% of initial body weight are selected.
5. A method according to any preceding claim wherein the rodents are laboratory rats or laboratory mice.
6. A method according to claim 6 wherein the rodents are *Rattus norvegicus*.
7. A method of screening water-retentive materials for rodenticidal activity, wherein a water-retentive material is fed to rodents and the rodents are tested to determine whether or to what extent the water-retentive material has disrupted water transport through the wall of the gut.
8. A method according to claim 7 wherein the rodents are tested to determine whether or to what extent the water-retentive material has disrupted ion transport through the wall of the gut.
9. A method according to claim 7 wherein the effect of ingesting the water-retentive material on the size or condition of the thymus gland is tested.

10. A method according to claim 1 wherein the rodents are examined for symptoms selected from the group consisting of: bloating of the gut, impaction or compaction of the caecum and impaction or compaction of the intestine.
11. A method according to claim 1 wherein said water-retentive material is of natural origin.
12. A method according to claim 1 wherein said water-retentive material is cellulosic material.
13. A method according to claim 12 wherein the water-retentive material is derived from corn-cobs.
14. A method according to claim 1 wherein the rodents are examined *post mortem*.
15. A method according to claim 1 wherein the water-retentive material is substantially non-toxic to humans.
16. A rodenticide comprising a water-retentive material as the active ingredient and a rodent attractant.
17. A rodenticide according to claim 16 wherein the water-retentive material is cellulosic material.
18. A rodenticide according to claim 17 wherein the water-retentive material comprises alpha-cellulose.
19. A rodenticide according to claim 17 wherein the cellulosic material comprises purified cellulose derived from the core of the cob of the DK 446 maize hybrid or from the core of the cob of an agonist of the DK 446 hybrid.
20. A rodenticide comprising cellulosic water-retentive material as the active ingredient and a rodent attractant, the cellulosic water-retentive material being substantially free of corn-cob material.

21. A rodenticide comprising cellulosic water-retentive material as the active ingredient and a rodent attractant, the cellulosic water-retentive material being substantially free of material derived from the core of the cob of the DK 446 maize hybrid or from the core of the cob of an agonist of the DK 446 hybrid.

22. A rodenticide according to claim 15, further comprising a binder.

23. A rodenticide according to claim 15 which is in pellet form.

24. A rodenticide according to claim 15 wherein the bait attractant comprises sweet material.

25. A rodenticide according to claim 24 wherein the bait attractant comprises molasses.

26. A rodenticide according to any of claim 15 which in use disrupts ion transport through the wall of the gut of the rodent.

27. A moisture-proof container of rodenticide as claimed in claim 15.

28. A method of making a rodenticide comprising the steps of combining a water-retentive material with a rodent attractant, the water-retentive material being the active ingredient of the rodenticide.

29. A method according to claim 28 wherein the water-retentive material is cellulosic material.

30. A method according to claim 29 wherein the water-retentive material comprises alpha-cellulose.

31. A method according to claim 28 wherein the cellulosic material comprises purified cellulose derived from the core of the cob of the DK 446 maize hybrid or from the core of the cob of an agonist of the DK 446 hybrid.

32. A method according to claim 27 wherein at least the water-retentive material is dried under conditions of elevated temperature and/or pressure.

33. A method of making a rodenticide, the method comprising the step of combining cellulosic water-retentive material with a rodent attractant, the cellulosic water-retentive material being substantially free of corn-cob material and being the active ingredient of the rodenticide.

34. A method as claimed in claim 32, wherein the the cellulosic water-retentive material is substantially free of material derived from the core of the cob of the DK 446 maize hybrid or from the core of the cob of an agonist of the DK 446 hybrid.

35. A method according to claim 27 wherein the rodenticide is pelletised.

36. A method of alleviating rodent infestation comprising depositing in an area of rodent infestation a rodenticide as claimed in claim 16, the rodenticide being non-toxic to humans and disrupting the digestion of the rodents on being ingested.